

**NOTHRIS CONGRESSARIELLA (BRAUND, 1858) (LEPIDOPTERA:
GELECHIIDAE) REARED FROM LUNDY.**

ROGER S. KEY

English Nature, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA.

BALM-LEAVED FIGWORT, *Scrophularia scorodonia*, is listed in the Vascular Plant Red Data Book (Perring & Farrell, 1983) and is a coastal "Lusitanian" species, occurring on the coasts of Portugal, Spain, western France and the south-west of Britain. In Britain it is found in the Scilly Islands, parts of Cornwall and Devon, Lundy, on one island off the Pembrokeshire coast and on the Channel Islands. On Lundy it is common on the eastern "Sidelands" (undercliffs), growing in areas of disturbance, usually cliff slippages, and also in wet flushes.

The gelechiid moth *Nothris congressariella* is specific to this foodplant in Britain, making larval spinings in terminal and lateral shoots of the plant. Its distribution and ecology is summarised by Parsons (in press) who describes it from several of the Scillys, as well as from three sites in Cornwall and from Herm and Guernsey in the Channel Isles and includes the Lundy record described here. It is classed as Red Data Book category 3 – Rare.

In May 1986 Dr Keith Alexander of the National Trust's Biological Survey Team noted that a high proportion of the plants of *Scrophularia scorodonia* on Lundy had terminal shoots spun together, each containing a micro-moth larva (National Trust, 1986). At the time, *Nothris congressariella* was known only from the Scilly Isles and Channel Islands and Alexander speculated that these larvae might be of that species or of a polyphagous other species but no attempt was made to try and rear the larvae.

On 22nd - 26th May 1993, I visited Lundy with Dr Stephen Compton of Leeds University, Miss Lynne Farrell and Mrs Rosy Key, both of English Nature, in order to monitor the populations of protected plants on Lundy, and to initiate an investigation into the interaction of Lundy Cabbage, *Coincya wrightii*, with its insect fauna. Keith Alexander recommended that lepidopterist Robert Heckford accompany us to search for larval spinings on *Scrophularia scorodonia* and attempt to determine their identity but unfortunately he was unable to come and the task fell to us.

We similarly noted larval spinings on a very high proportion, perhaps 70%, of the plants of *Scrophularia scorodonia*, many plants supporting between one and five young larvae, which were photographed. Fortunately, English Nature's main office at Peterborough maintains a display collection of scarce British plants in its forecourt, including one specimen of *Scrophularia scorodonia*.

On leaving the island, six specimens of larvae were collected and taken to Peterborough, where they were reared on cut shoots in water of *Scrophularia*

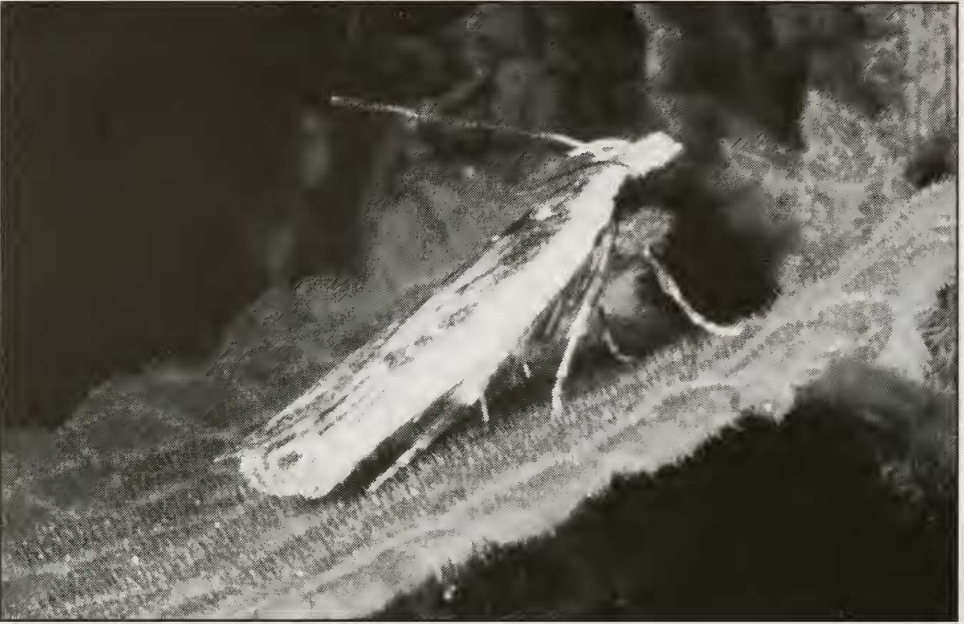


Fig. 1. *Nothris congressariella* – adult.



Fig. 2. *Nothris congressariella* – larvae.

scorodonia, sleeving on the live plant being impossible owing to the continual public access to the forecourt display plant. The larvae successfully created new spinnings on the soft young shoots, but these had to be frequently changed as they deteriorated rapidly once removed from the plant. Only one larva was eventually successfully reared, pupating on 3rd June within the larval spinning and the pupa was removed to prevent fungal

infection from the deteriorating foodplant. It emerged on 14th June, was photographed and its identity was confirmed as *Nothris congressariella* by Mr Mark Parsons of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Mere (1959) describes the larvae leaving the foodplant and pupating near the soil surface. In the artificial conditions in which I reared it, no conclusion can be made concerning its pupation in the larval spinnings.

I returned to the island in July 1993 with Robert Heckford and in June 1994 and on both occasions found abundant larval spinnings, although in 1994 the number of plants present was significantly lower than in the previous year, especially in the populations on the flushes. Such variations in numbers are not an uncommon feature of plant species dependent on soil disturbance.

On a holiday to Brittany in August 1993 I found *Scrophularia scorodonia* was abundant around the Golfe de Morbihan and most plants there had larval spinnings with larvae apparently identical to those of *Nothris congressariella*. On a visit to Lundy in late September 1994, no trace of spinnings or larvae could be found, nearly all of the plants of *Scrophularia scorodonia* having been reduced to the loose rosette of older leaves in which form it overwinters.

I am indebted to Keith Alexander for the suggestion to look on Lundy for the species and to Mark Parsons for the confirming the identity of the specimen.

References

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Eupithecia abietaria Goeze (Lep.: Geometridae) in Devon

During an examination of a collection of a local collector, Mr Peter Franghiada, I discovered three specimens of *E. abietaria* taken at Haldon, a Forestry Commission (Forest Enterprise) site. Dates were 24.vi.1985, 7.vii.1986 and 12.vii.1986. He kindly donated one of the specimens to me, as Devonshire recorder. I visited the site on 10.vii.1995, but although over 170 species of Lepidoptera were seen, *abietaria* was not amongst them. I did, however, take a worn example of this species at Bellever Forest, Dartmoor, on 18.vii.1995.– R. McCORMICK, 36 Paradise Road, Teignmouth, Devon TQ14 8NR.